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ABSTRACT

This one semester course syllabus entitled, "The Integration of Mexico and the United States: Societies in Transition," is interdisciplinary and taught by the Departments of Geography, Management, Foreign Language/Spanish, and Sociology/Archaeology at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse Institute for Latin American Studies. The course focuses primarily on placing in context events and processes occurring in the United States and Mexico that are pressing social issues for both countries. The course addresses specific transitional processes and issues in both societies along with the responses to the social issues raised by the transitional processes. (EH)

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# Mexico in Transition. Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminar Abroad 1996 (Mexico).

by Joel P. Latzinger

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Center for International Education (ED), Washington, DC.

Published: 1996

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

**Report to the Department of Education:**
**Mexico in Transition**
**Fulbright-Hays 1996 Summer Seminar**

**By**
**Joel P. Læzinger, Ph.D.**
**The University of Wisconsin-La Crosse**



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**Introduction**

The theme of the Fulbright Mexican Summer Seminar for 1996 focused on social change and the transition to democracy in that country. I stated in my application for the Seminar that I would utilize it to "...create a section on Mexico..." in an interdisciplinary course that the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Institute for Latin American studies would offer in the Spring 1997 semester. The proposed course's title is: **"The Integration of Mexico and the United States: Societies in Transition,"** and it will be offered through the cooperation of the Colleges of Science, Liberal Studies and Business. The four departments participating in the course will be the Departments of Geography, Management, Foreign Languages/Spanish and Sociology/Archaeology. The course is being designed to assist our students in:

1) Learning about the complex issues related to the social changes occurring in North America, and specifically the social and economic changes occurring in Mexico and the United States.

2) Enhancing their critical thinking skills that will enable them to better assess news and media discussions about issues affecting people and environments across borders.

My specific contribution to the above mentioned course will focus on three general areas. The first part of the course will focus on placing in **context** events and processes that are occurring in the U.S. and Mexico, and which are pressing social issues for both societies. My contribution to this section of the course will be a presentation on the historical and sociological issues related to both countries' development. I will clarify several sociological concepts that are related to social change and development. This would also include a brief presentation of development theories and how they have been applied to each society's situation. Concepts that will be explored will include: social change, development, corporate and civil society, social institutions and social structure. Modernization, world system, dependency and neo-liberal development theories will be presented and discussed. The students will be engaged in the interactive learning process to absorb this material. The students will be asked to define in their own terms the meaning of these concepts and give examples of how they and/or their friends are being affected by them (for example: have they any knowledge of people who have lost or gained employment as a result of NAFTA or have they had any contact with Mexican immigrants).

In addition to a discussion about general concepts and theories regarding social change I will also define and discuss the basic concepts related to social inequality and stratification. Concepts such as class, status and power will be explored and defined and their relevance to current social issues explored. For example, both Mexican and U.S. middle-classes have experienced downward mobility. What are the causes of this downward mobility and what are the differences and similarities between Mexican and U.S. downward mobility? How do the various social theories discussed above explain the downward mobility of the middle class?



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The second section of the course will focus its attention on specific transitional processes and issues. Contemporary political change and development in both societies will be the primary topic presented in this section. The breakdown in political legitimacy of the dominant political parties and the rise of political opposition parties will be discussed. Calls for election reforms in both societies and the rise of conservative/right wing political groups in both societies will be explored and discussed along with the failure of the political processes in each country to effectively deal with its economic and political crises. Immigration and the globalization of each country's economy are also important processes that must be explored by the course. The responses of social movements in each country to the problems created by immigration and globalization will be presented and the connection between globalization and immigration will be explored. This section of the course will also present a discussion of the actors who are playing leading roles in defining the solutions to the problems created by the previously mentioned processes. For example, what role do nongovernmental organizations, social movements and traditional political elites play in addressing the problems and their solution?

Finally, this section of the course will address the impact that the transitional processes are having on major social institutions and culture. Cultural changes brought on by increased communication and contact either through immigration and/or the media will be explored along with changes in family organization and gender roles within the family. Language issues and changes in cultural norms will be explored along with how popular culture in both countries are being influenced by each other.

The third section of the course will focus on the response to the social issues raised by the transitional processes. The response of the each country's political institutions to the increasing demands being made upon them will be explored. Issues such as Proposition 187, English only, trade relations, maquiladoras and declining living standards are all being raised in each country's political debate. These issues have given rise to the development of social movements which are becoming increasingly important actors in the political process that is addressing them.

## The Course Outline

Week 1
(Jan. 21-24) Introduction to the course, course requirements and assessment of student knowledge. Using the Internet as an educational tool. An introduction to Mexico. Basic statistics on size and demographics and geographical phenomena.

Week 2
(Jan. 27-31) Class feedback and interaction related to movie entitled: "Emerging Mexico."

## Establishing the context

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| | |
|---|---|
| Week 3<br>(Feb. 3-7) | Brief presentation of each country's development history.<br>Colonization and its cultural legacy |
| Week 4<br>(Feb. 10-15) | Nation building and cultural identity |
| Week 5<br>(Feb. 17-21) | The conquest and ethnic relations<br>Dominant and subordinate groups--caste and class<br>*Somos Mexicanos* and the American Melting Pot? |

## Transitional Processes and Issues

| | |
|---|---|
| Week 6<br>(Feb. 24-28) | The process of economic development |
| Week 7<br>(Mar. 3-7) | The expansion of national frontiers and resource bases<br>The Mexican and American models of early development |
| Week 8<br>(Mar. 17-21) | Contemporary social and political issues<br>The crisis of political legitimacy<br>State and Civil Society |
| Week 9<br>(Mar. 24-28) | Contemporary social and political issues (continued)<br>Women and gender roles |
| Week 10<br>(Apr. 1-4) | Industrial and environmental issues<br>Maquiladoras |
| Week 11<br>(Apr. 7-11) | Industrial and environmental issues (continued)<br>NAFTA, national self-interest and migration |
| Week 12<br>(Apr. 14-18) | Transitional processes<br>Political reform<br>Institutional and extra-institutional pressures<br>Social movements and NGOs |



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Week 13 (Apr 21-25) Transition processes (continued)
Globalization and the search for identity
Its cultural and economic dimensions

Week 14 (Apr. 28-May 2) Wrap-up and conclusions

| *Time* | *Leading Facilitator* | *Themes/Tasks/Readings* |
|---|---|---|
| Week 1 | All | Introduction- All<br>Review of Syllabus-<br>Expectations/Grades-<br>Pre-test/Assessment- Leticia |
| | Virgil/ Joel | Mexico intro (Social statistics/geography)<br>Map exercise/slide-lecture, Internet exercise |
| Week 2 | Virgil | Video ("Emerging Mexico")<br>Small group discussions- All |
| Week 3 | Joel/ Virgil | Historical cultural context: Mexico & U.S.<br>Mexican development- Joel<br>Other Native cultures of Mexico-Virgil<br>Historical geography of Mexico- Virgil<br>Reading: Crockcroft, pp. 71-100 |
| Week 4 | Joel/ Leticia | Nation building and ethnic relations- Joel<br>The nature of perception- Leticia<br>Culture defined-<br>Culture in context: The labyrinth of Solititude- Isolda<br>The meaning of time - two perspectives<br>Culture in transition<br>Reading: La Botz, pp. 21-82, Octavio Paz |
| Week 5 | Isolda/ Joel | Somos Mexicanos and the U.S. melting pot<br>Dominant and subordinate groups - Joel<br>The conquest and ethnic relations - Joel |



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|---|---|---|
| | | The significance of conquest for literature, art and religion-Isolda.<br>Reading: Clava pp. 17-92; NACLA (Vol 28 #1) |
| Week 6 | Joel | Dependence and development theories<br>Cycle of underdevelopment<br>Reading: Klarén & Bossert, pp.3-34, 109-123, 195-233 |
| Week 7 | Virgil/<br>Leticia | Expansion of national frontiers and resources<br>American and Mexican models of development |
| Week 8 | Joel/<br>Isolda | Contemporary social and issues, political legitimacy, and the state and civil society<br>The Chiapas Rebellion -Isolda<br>Reading: Cornelius, pp. 51-120, Fulbright Summer Seminar Notes |
| Week 9 | Isolda | Women and gender roles<br>Movie "Like Water for Chocolate"<br>Frida Khalo |
| Week 10 | Leticia/<br>Joel | Industrial development- Joel<br>The Maquiladora program- Leticia<br>Movie, "The Global Assembly line"<br>The environment- Virgil<br>Reading: Clava Vol. I |
| Week 11 | Leticia | NAFTA |
| Week 12 | Virgil/<br><br>Isolda<br>Leticia | Migration - Virgil<br>The third country -<br>Borderlands/La Frontera- Isolda<br>Proposition 187<br>Selena<br>Migration to Mexico/Golden Ghettos- Virgil |
| Week 13 | Joel/<br>Isolda | Political reform and social movements- Joel<br>Battles in the Desert/ Los rituales del caos<br>Reading: Latin American Perspectives |
| Week 14 | All | Globalization and the search for identity |



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## Topic Presentations

### (This is a list of topics that I will develop)

The Internet has made the task of finding information about Mexico much easier than before the advent of computer technology. Today's students have much more readily available information at their finger tips than any other previous generation. The following information is copied directly from "web pages" and it illustrates the high quality information available to students. This course will encourage students to take advantage of the benefits of the web in learning about Mexico. Information about Mexico and how to access it will be presented through out the course. In addition to obtaining documentation via the Internet, students participating in this course will acquire Mexican student electronic pen pals with whom they will share ideas. Tentative arrangements for this activity were made during my **Fulbright** assisted visit to the University of Guanajuato during the summer of 1996.

### Contextual information: Mexico

Geography

Total land area = 1,972,550 sq km (less than three times the size of Texas)
Coastline = 9,330 km
Land use = 12% arable land
1% permanent crops
39% meadows and pastures
24% forest and woodland
24% other

Demographics

Population = 93,985,848 (July 1995 est.)
Age structure
0-14 years = 37%
15-64 years = 59%
65 & over = 4%

Population growth rate = 1.9% (1995 est.)
Birth rate: = 26.64 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)
Death rate: = 4.64 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)
Net migration rate: -3.03 migrants/1,000 population (1995 est.)
Life expectancy at birth:



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total population = 73.34 years
male = 69.74 years
female = 77.11 years

Total fertility rate: 3.09 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Social data

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write (1990)
total population = 88%
male = 90%
female = 85%

Labor force by occupation:
services = 31.7%
agriculture, forestry, hunting & fishing = 28%
commerce = 14.6%
manufacturing = 11.1%
construction = 8.4%
transportation = 4.7%
mining & quarrying = 1.5%

*(source: CIA World Factbook, 1995:www.odci.gov/cia/publications/95fact/mx.html)*

## Contextual Information: The United States

Geography

Total land area = 9,372,610 sq km
Coastline = 19,924 km
Land use = 20% arable land
= 0% permanent crops
= 26% meadows and pastures
= 29% forest and woodland
= 25% other

Demographics

Population = 263,814,032 (July, 1995 est.)
Age Structure
0-14 = 22%
15-64 = 65%
65 & over = 13%
Population growth rate = 1.02% (1995 est.)
Birth rate = 15.25 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)
Death rate = 8.38 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)
Net migration rate = 3.34 migrants/1,000 population (1995 est.)
Life expectancy at birth:
total population = 75.99 years

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male = 72.8 years
female = 79.7 years
Total fertility rate: 2.08 children born/woman (1995est.

Social data

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write (1979)
total population = 97%
male = 97%
female = 97%
Labor force by occupation:
managerial & professional = 27%
technical, sales & administrative support = 30.3%
services = 13.7%
manufacturing, mining, transportation, and crafts = 25.5%
farming, forestry, and fishing = 2.9%

*(source: CIA World Factbook, 1995:www.odci.gov/cia/publications/95fact/us.html)*

## Mexico: Social characteristics

1990 Census information

The census showed that 7.9% of the population speaks one of Mexico's 68 **indigenous languages; 80.8% of that proportion is concentrated in eight states.** Indigenous peoples, migrant workers, and small landowners from the core of the impoverished rural population.

The three leading causes of death among males in the group aged 15-64 are accidents, homicide, and cirrhosis, whereas among females they are malignant neoplasms, heart disease and diabetes mellitus. Tuberculosis is frequent among adults in all regions of the country. **The five leading causes of death among the indigenous populations in 542 municipalities were intestinal infectious diseases, heart disease, accidents, influenza and pneumonia, and measles.** Malnutrition was 131.8% more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas. The population that lacks care because of geographic, economic or cultural accessibility problems is estimated a 6% of the total. It is recognized that both the coverage and the quality of health care among indigenous groups is deficient.

In 1992, coverage with drinking water services in urban areas was estimated at 90.4% and was over 95% in areas with more than 80,000 inhabitants. Coverage in rural areas is 66.%. Sewer system coverage in urban areas is 81.4% and rural sanitation coverage is 28.7% The Federal District has the highest proportion of dwellings connected to wastewater disposal system (93.8%) and the state of Oaxaca, which has a high degree of impoverishment, has the lowest (29.8%).

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*(source: Pan American Health Organization:www.paho.org/english/mexico.htm)*

The students will be presented with this information and then asked to produce other information related to the topics being covered in class, and which will then be analyzed and conclusions will be drawn.

# Lecture Outlines

## Mexican Development: Past and Present Strategies

Conquest and extraction of wealth: establishing patterns of exploitation
- Land Grants, encomiendas and wealth
- Building an historic elite and *cacique* power
- Colonialism and dependency
- Cultural legacies: *personalismo, compadrazgo, mestizos* and *caudillismo*

Building a modern corporate state
- Interest group politics
- The party of institutionalized corruption
- Selective repression

Economic strategies
- The Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA)
- Economic nationalism: import substitution
- 1982 debt crisis: the emergence of neo-liberalism

The economic crisis: 1994
- Opportunities for transitions: Political economy revisited
- NAFTA, maquiladoras and the ties that bind
- The ignition of the Mexican volcano

## The U.S. Colonial experience and nation building

Colonies and conquest
- Indian removal
- Colonies as economic production units fueling British industrialization
- Economic History--*Laissie Faire* government

## Stratification: The product of social and economic processes

Economic Nationalism and Stratification

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Slow but steady growth of an urban middle class
Agricultural self sufficiency

The internationalization of the Mexican economy
The debt crisis of 1982: economic and social turmoil
Neo-liberalism, NAFTA and the *crisis*
Social movements, NGOs and the search for alternatives
Chiapas as a bellwether

## U.S. Stratification

Building a middle-class society
Economic issues
Middle class as lifestyle

Dismantling a middle-class society
Lowering expectations?

## Theories of Development

Modernization theory
Dependency theory
Corporatism
Neo-liberalism

## Mexico in transition?

Political hegemony or pluralistic democracy?
PAN, PRD as challengers or old wine in brand new bottles?
Zapatistas: new wine in brand new bottles

The corporate state or civil society?
Challenging the elites or cooptation?
Social movements, can they be contained?
*PRONASOL* as a model for containment?

## NAFTA: Issues and Controversies

NAFTA in the context of the World Economic System
The consequences of NAFTA for Mexico and the U.S.
Chiapas as a bellwether



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